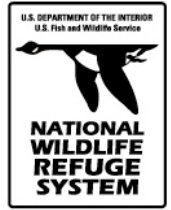


# News Release

## *National Wildlife Refuge System*



### **Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge**

La Crosse District  
555 Lester Avenue  
Onalaska, WI 54650

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Lake Onalaska Voluntary Waterfowl Avoidance Area**

A 3,350-acre Voluntary Waterfowl Avoidance Area will once again be in effect on Lake Onalaska (Navigation Pool 7) of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge during the 2006 fall migration. Dates of the program are October 15 through mid-November. The Avoidance Area, marked with white buoys, covers a portion of the lake used by large numbers of migrating waterfowl, particularly canvasbacks.

All boaters using Lake Onalaska for fishing, hunting, sailing, or other activities are asked to detour around the area marked with buoys to prevent unnecessary disturbance to waterfowl while they rest and feed.

Waterfowl are sensitive to human activity occurring near their resting and feeding areas. Even relatively distant boating activity may be enough to cause the birds to flush and burn-up valuable energy reserves. Boaters who voluntarily throttle down and avoid concentrations of waterfowl, wherever they occur, will help these birds accumulate fat reserves required for the remainder of their long migrations.

The Avoidance Area continues to be successful as measured by waterfowl use and boater compliance with the program. In early November 2005, the number of waterfowl using the area peaked at nearly 93,000 birds, including about 49,000 canvasbacks.

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Boater compliance with the program was last monitored in 2004 by staff from the U.S. Geological Survey. The key result: while boating traffic on Lake Onalaska has increased steadily since the 1980's, the proportion of lakewide boating events that resulted in disturbance to waterfowl in 2004 was at the lowest point measured and well below the rate of boating disturbance to waterfowl before establishment of the Avoidance Area. Further, many boaters made an obvious effort to comply with the Avoidance Area by boating around concentrations of waterfowl.

Lake Onalaska has traditionally been one of the major stopping points for migrating waterfowl along the Upper Mississippi River. Large numbers of waterfowl are expected to again concentrate on the lake in the upcoming weeks because of the abundant food supply available.

In addition to the many individual boaters who have made this program successful since its inception in 1986, program partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Lake Onalaska Protection and Rehabilitation District, and the La Crosse County Conservation Alliance.

A card describing the program is available at most boat landings on Lake Onalaska, area sporting goods stores, and the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge office located at 555 Lester Avenue in Onalaska, Wisc. Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and the telephone number is (608) 783-8405. The 2004 monitoring results are also available at the Refuge office.

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*The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge is the most visited refuge in the United States. The refuge extends 261 miles along the Upper Mississippi River from Wabasha, Minn. to Rock Island, Ill., protecting and preserving habitat for migratory birds, fish, and a variety of other wildlife. This 240,000 acre refuge was established in 1924.*